

CHAPTER V

THE NATURE OF OSIRIS

§ I. *Osiris a Corn-God*

Osiris in THE foregoing survey of the myth and ritual of Osiris may suffice to prove that in one of his aspects the god was a person!- personification of the corn, which may be said to die and the corn? ^{f come to life again even} Through all the pomp and glamour with which in later times the priests had invested his worship, the conception of him as the corn-god comes clearly out In the festival of his death and resurrection, which was celebrated in the month of Khoiak and at a later period In the month of Athyr. That festival appears to have been essentially a festival of sowing, which properly fell at the time when the husbandman actually committed the seed to the earth. On that occasion an effigy of the corn-god, moulded of earth and corn, was buried with funeral rites in the ground In order that, dying there, he might come to life again with the new crops. The ceremony was, in fact, a charm to ensure the growth of the corn by sympathetic magic, and we may conjecture that as such It was practised in a simple form by every Egyptian farmer on his fields long before it was adopted and transfigured by the priests in the stately ritual of the temple. In the modern, but doubtless ancient, Arab custom of burying ^u the Old Man," namely, a sheaf of wheat, in the harvest-field and praying that he may return from the dead, ¹ we see the germ out of which the worship of the corn-god Osiris was probably developed.

The details of his myth fit in well with this interpretation of the god. He was said to be the

offspring of Sky and

¹ See above, p. 48.